

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 VIENTI 06672 01 OF 02 300305Z

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ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5852

INFO USIA WASHDC

DIA WASHDC//AH//AH-3//AH-6//

AMEMBASSY BANGFOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 6672

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ACOM, LA

SUBJECT: APPROACH BY DEMONSTRATION-LEADER TO PAO

SUMMARY: A FORMER USAID EMPLOYEE WHO WAS ACTIVE IN DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THIS MISSION LAST SUMMER VISITED PAO ON DECEMBER 24, OSTENSIBLY TO WARN HIM THAT U.S. SUBSCRIBERS TO THE FORMER USAID/LAOS TELEPHONE SYSTEM WOULD SOON HAVE THEIR LINES DISCONNECTED AT CENTRAL SWITCHBOARD. IN WHAT MAY HAVE BEEN MAIN POINT OF THE APPROACH, DEMONSTRATOR SAID HE AND OTHER FORMER AID EMPLOYEES WOULD LIKE TO DO "SECRET WORK" FOR THE AMERICANS. ON DECEMBER 25 EMPLOYEE CALLED ON PAO AGAIN, THIS TIME TO PROPOSE RECONSTITUTION OF FORMER LOCAL EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION. (THIS UNREALISTIC IDEA MAY HAVE BEEN CONCEIVED TO MEET PAO'S NEGATIVE REACTION TO FIRST APPROACH.) NATURALLY WE ARE GIVING THIS MAN THE COLD SHOULDER. END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 VIENTI 06672 01 OF 02 300305Z

1. ON DECEMBER 24, PAO WAS VISITED AT HIS OFFICE BY BOUNMI SAKADIPHUT, A FORMER EMPLOYEE OF BOTH USAID AND DAO WHO WAS A LEADER OF DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST U.S. MISSION IN MAY AND JUNE. PAO HAD FREQUENT CONTACT WITH BOUNMI IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH LOCAL EMPLOYEES AND ON SUCH MATTERS AS REMOVAL OF AMERICAN EMPLOYEES' PERSONAL EFFECTS FROM SILVER CITY COMPOUND AFTER ITS OCCUPATION ON JUNE 28. BOUNMI DURING THAT PERIOD PLAYED AMBIGUOUS BUT OCCASIONALLY HELPFUL ROLE. PAO DEPARTED ON HOME LEAVE IN LATE JULY AND HAD NOT SEEN BOUNMI SINCE, EXCEPT FOR A CHANCE MEETING AT THE THAT LUANG FAIR IN NOVEMBER.

2. BOUNMI ON DECEMBER 24 SAID HE WAS CALLING IN HIS NEW CAPACITY AS "CHIEF OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES FOR LAO PATRIOTIC FRONT HEADQUARTERS." HE SAID HE WORKS OUT OF THE NA HAI DIAO COMPOUND, WHICH FORMERLY HOUSED DAO AND MUCH OF USAID. HE DESCRIBED HIS RESPONSIBILITIES AS CONCERNED WITH "OVER-ALL ADMINISTRATION IN TECHNICAL AREAS." SO AS TO MINIMIZE DISTURBANCE AND "AVOID MIS-UNDERSTANDING," HE WISHED TO INFORM EMBASSY AND ITS EMPLOYEES THAT WITHIN NEXT DAY OR TWO TELEPHONE LINES OF ALL EMBASSY SUBSCRIBERS TO FORMER USAID/LAOS TELEPHONE SYSTEM WOULD BE DISCONNECTED AT SWITCHBOARD IN NA HAI DIAO. (COMMENT: THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED AS OF MID-DAY DECEMBER 29.) PAO TOLD BOUNMI HE WOULD INFORM THE REST OF THE MISSION AND, IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION, TOLD BOUNMI MISSION HAD "SOME" PTT(GOVERNMENT'S PUBLIC PHONE SYSTEM) LINES AND THUS WOULD NOT BE TOTALLY BEREFT OF TELEPHONE SERVICE.

3. PAO ASKED CASUALLY HOW BOUNMI AND OTHER FORMER LOCAL EMPLOYEES OF THE MISSION WERE GETTING ALONG. BOUNMI SAID THAT AS AN LPF OFFICIAL, RATHER THAN A DIRECT-HIRE EMPLOYEE OF THE PDRL, HE GOT ONLY A SMALL CASH SALARY AND SOME RICE. HE ADDED THAT FORMER EMPLOYEES OF USAID/LAOS-- SOME 550 OF WHOM HE SAID NOW WORK FOR THE LPF AT NA HAI DIAO COMPOUND -- PLANNED TO APPROACH NEW GOVERNMENT SHORTLY TO SEEK BETTER REMUNERATION. (COMMENT: WE DOUBT THAT MANY OF PDRL'S "DIRECT-HIRE" EMPLOYEES ARE SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER OFF.)

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 VIENTI 06672 01 OF 02 300305Z

4. BOUNMI ADDED THAT HE HAD "A SECRET MATTER" HE WANTED TO DISCUSS WITH PAO. THIS WAS THAT HE AND A NUMBER OF OTHER FORMER USAID LOCALS WANTED "TO COME BACK AND WORK FOR THE AMERICANS." PAO ASKED WHETHER BOUNMI MEANT THAT THESE EMPLOYEES WANTED TO JOIN EMBASSY STAFF AS FSLE'S. BOUNMI SAID NO, BUT EMPLOYEES NEEDED MONEY AND WANTED TO "WORK FOR AMERICANS," IMPLYING THAT SUCH "WORK" WOULD

BE ON A COVERT BASIS. PAO ANSWERED THAT U.S. MISSION DID NOT INVOLVE ITSELF IN SUCH RELATIONSHIPS. BOUNMI THEN SAID HE THOUGHT PAO MUST NOT BELIEVE HIM. PAO SAID HE WAS NOT QUESTIONING TRUTH OF BOUNMI'S STATEMENT BUT MERELY TRYING TO MAKE CLEAR THAT, WHATEVER THE PAST AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN LAOS, MISSION COULD NOT AND WOULD NOT ENTER INTO SORT OF ACTIVITY THAT BOUNMI SEEMED TO HAVE IN MIND.

5. REMAINDER OF CONVERSATION WAS INCONSEQUENTIAL, ALTHOUGH BOUNMI EXPRESSED DESIRE TO SEE PAO AGAING (HE HAD ALREADY ASKED PAO WHERE HE LIVED) AND SAID HE WAS INTERESTED IN BUYING PAO'S CAR.

6. ON FOLLOWING DAY (DECEMBER 25), BOUNMI AND ANOTHER LAO SHOWED UP UNEXPECTEDLY AT PAO'S HOUSE, OSTENSIBLY TO LOOK AT PAO'S CAR. COUNMI ELABORATED ON THEME OF PREVIOUS DAY, ABOUT "DISCRIMINATION" AGAINST THOSE LAO FORMERLY EMPLOYED BY U.S. MISSION, AND SAID THEY WERE NOT RECEIVING SAME TREATMENT AS EMPLOYEES OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS WHERE PROTESTS HAD OCCURRED IN LATE 1974 AND EARLY 1975, SUCH AS ELECTRICITE DU LAOS. BOUNMI SEEMED TO THINK EX-EMPLOYEES OF U.S. MISSION COULD BETTER THEIR STATUS BY IN EFFECT RECONSTITUTING THE ASSOCIATION OF LAO EMPLOYEES OF THE AMERICAN MISSION (ALEAM) AND NOTED CKCORRECTLY) THAT HE HAD SEEN ALEAM DOCUMENTS LISTING PAO AS AN ADVISOR TO THE ASSOCIATION. COUNMI SAID HE AND FOUR OTHER EX-EMPLOYEES OF MISSION, ALL INVOLVED IN DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST MISSION, WISHED TO MEET WITH PAO TO GET ADVICE (SUBJECT NOT FURTHER SPECIFIED) AND WITH SOME URGENCY SINCE TWO OF THE FIVE WERE THAI AND WOULD SHORTLY RETURN TO THAILAND. HOWEVER, MEETING COULD BE HELD WITHOUT THE TWO THAI IF PAO PREFERRED.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 VIENTI 06672 01 OF 02 300305Z

CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 VIENTI 06672 02 OF 02 300306Z

70

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 6672

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

7. PAO AGAING POINTED OUT THAT ANY PROBLEMS WERE NOW SOLELY BETWEEN FORMER EMPLOYEES AND THE LAO GOVERNMENT AND THAT AS A CONSEQUENCE NEITHER HE PERSONALLY NOR THE U.S. MISSION OFFICIALLY COULD BECOME INVOLVED. PAO GAVE BOUNMI NO ENCOURAGEMENT ABOUT PROPOSED MEETING.

8. COMMENT: WE HAVE NEVER BEEN ENTIRELY CERTAIN OF BOUNMI'S STANDING WITH THE LPF OR OF HIS MOTIVATIONS. HE IS REASONABLY INTELLIGENT AND SPEAKS FAIRLY GOOD ENGLISH, ALTHOUGH HE AND PAO CONVERSE IN LAO. LAST SUMMER WHEN NEGOTIATING MAJOR ISSUES AS A PROTEST LEADER BOUNMI WAS EXTREMELY OBDURATE, BUT HE WAS HELPFUL ON A FEW SUBSIDIARY PROBLEMS, E.G., IN GETTING LAO EMPLOYEES OF UNIVERSAL AMERICAN ENTERPRISES TO END SMALL-SCALE "SIEGE" OF UAE PROJECT MANAGER'S HOUSE AND IN ARRANGING PERMISSION FOR US TO REMOVE VEHICLE RECORDS FROM GSO AND SOME PERSONAL PROPERTY FROM SILVER CITY.

9. IN THE PRESENT CASE BOUNMI MAY SIMPLY BE ACTING IN NAIVE HOPE THAT EMBASSY COULD OR WOULD HELP OUT DISLOYAL
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 VIENTI 06672 02 OF 02 300306Z

FORMER EMPLOYEES WHO WERE IN THE VANGUARD OF "THE REVOLUTION" SIX MONTHS AGO BUT ARE NOW RELEGATED TO PERIPHERAL STATUS. IT IS JUST AS PROBABLE, HOWEVER, THAT BOUNMI IN RATHER CLUMSY FASHION IS TRYING TO SET US UP. IN ANY EVENT, CHARGE HAS DIRECTED PAO TO DO NOTHING MORE THAN LISTEN TO BOUNMI SHOULD HE CALL AGAIN AND TO CONTINUE TO MAKE IT CLEAR TO HIM THAT WE HAVE NO INTEREST IN HIS PROBLEM.

10. WITH REGARD TO TELEPHONE SERVICE, OUR PROSPECTIVE LOSS OF ACCESS TO THE FORMER USAID SWITCHBOARD AT NA HAI DIAO WILL BE OF LITTLE PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCE. INDEED, THE FACT THAT OUR LINES WERE NOT DISCONNECTED LONG AGO IS ONE OF THE MANY SMALL ANOMALIES HERE, AND WE HAVE ASSUMED ALL ALONG THAT CALLS OVER THE FORMER USAID SYSTEM (LIKE THOSE THROUGH PTT) WERE BEING MONITORED. WE HAVE HAD SUSPICIOUSLY LITTLE DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING NEW LINES FOR RESIDENCES FROM PTT IN LAST FEW WEEKS, SO ALL BUT SIX OF OUR RESIDENCES NOW HAVE PTT SERVICE (FEW OF THEM DID BEFORE THE EVENTS OF LAST SUMMER) AND ALL RESIDENCES HAVE VHF TWO-CHANNEL RADIOS. ALL EMBASSY OFFICES NOW SERVED BY EXTENSIONS OFF THE SWITCHBOARD WHICH WE OBTAINED FROM U.S. MILITARY SOURCES AND WHICH IS HOUSED IN ADMINISTRATIVE ANNEX. IT IS CONNECTED TO A PTT TRUNK LINE. SEVERAL MISSION OFFICES HAVE DIRECT PTT LINES AS WELL.
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